

The following is a general overview of the study area environment. The affected environment of the North Spokane Freeway project area incorporates social, economic, and environmental elements. The characteristics of the area are linked to regional plans and issues. For detailed information, see Chapter 4 and the specific impact analysis area.

Land Use

There are a variety of land uses, zones, and taxing districts in the project area. These include vacant land, tax-exempt public land, single-family houses, apartments, and retail, service, and industrial uses.

The project area is being influenced by city of Spokane neighborhood plans and the Spokane County Comprehensive Plan. The latter states, “Goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan focus on an orderly pattern of growth between developed and undeveloped areas, and the promotion of commercial and industrial development which is complementary and compatible with adjacent land uses and the surrounding environment.”

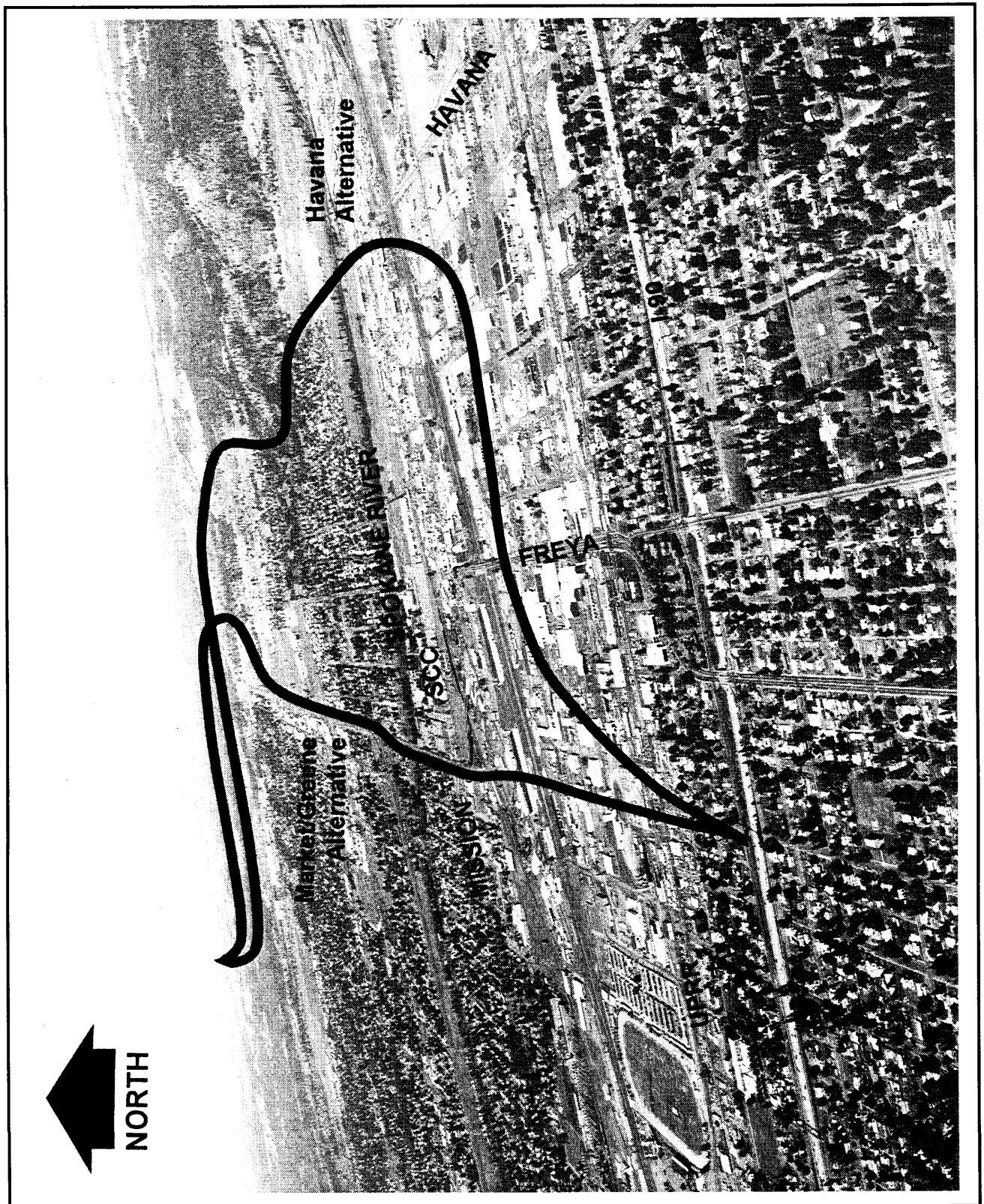
The county’s urban land use designation is intended to promote a city-like environment, which includes a variety of land uses such as residential, commercial, light industrial, and public recreational facilities. County land use policies also support a concentration of high rise, high density activity in the city. In most cases, neighborhood plans promote the status quo, emphasizing the single-family character of the neighborhood and supporting minimal high density residential development.

City of Spokane Land Use Plan issues include how to “maintain the central business district, how to inhibit the continuation of urban sprawl, and how adequate transportation systems can be provided without disrupting neighborhoods.” The city of Spokane is required to plan under the State Growth Management Act (GMA), and to implement planning changes. Adapting neighborhood plans and the comprehensive plan to fit the policies that the GMA promotes could well lead to changes within the project area. What these changes may be are unknown at this time and hard to predict. The anticipated completion for both the county and city plans based on the GMA is not expected until 1998.

The preferred alternative is consistent with the city of Spokane’s Transportation Plans and is recognized by Spokane County as the preferred alternative to serve future capacity for north/south traffic. Continuation of plans to provide water and sewer service to Spokane’s north side in conjunction with the building of the freeway will allow planned growth to occur.

Land uses along both sides of I-90, within the project area and beyond, are predominantly single-family residential (see Figure 3-1). The single-family neighborhood in the area of the NSF interchange with I-90 borders a commercial strip that buffers it from the industrial area north of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks (see Figure 3-2).

City of Spokane Neighborhood Locations
Figure 3-1



The Trent Industrial Area can be seen beyond the proposed Interchange for the North Spokane Freeway with I-90. (Looking North)

Trent Industrial Area
Figure 3-2



The Project area from just north of the Spokane River to Lincoln Road. (Looking North)

Project Area, North of Spokane River **Figure 3-3**

The heavy industrial zone north of the commercial strip transitions to light manufacturing between UPRR and Mission Avenue. There is a community college and vacant land between the industrial area and the Spokane River. North of the river to Francis Avenue, there is a predominance of single-family neighborhoods with some interspersed industrial and commercial land (see Figure 3-3).

North of Francis Avenue, the project is within the county where development is more sparse. The project area's eastern edge is characterized by a rural environment. Large tracts of vacant industrial land are to the west, buffering the Kaiser Mead plant (see Figure 3-4).

There are urban residential regions between US 2 and US 395 characterized by subdivision development. The north end of the project corridor is wooded, with scattered single-family residences and businesses.

There is both prime and unique farmland and farmland of statewide and local importance within the project area. All these areas are designated for urban, suburban, and semi-rural use in the current county comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances.

Social and Economic Environment

Social Elements

The Spokane area is rich in recreational facilities and parks. Within the project area, there are numerous playgrounds, and one publicly owned and two privately owned golf courses. The city of Spokane's Parks and Open Spaces Plan recognizes two recreation trails within the area bounded by the build alternatives. There are also several city parks and recreational properties adjacent to or within the project area.

With an approximate 1993 population of 384,000, Spokane County is eastern Washington's most populous county. The 1990 census indicated an increase of 20,250 residents over the 1980 population total. The city of Spokane had a 1990 population of 177,196, an increase of about 5,896 over the 1980 total. Although Spokane's economy was relatively stagnant and population growth slow during the 1980s, the growth rate has increased considerably in the past several years. This is evident in the fact that the county has seen a population increase of about 22,236 between 1990 and 1993.

There are numerous religious, social, and governmental institutions within the project area. At least 22 churches are either near or within the study area. Several social services are located west of Market. However, very few social services are within the project area boundaries.

The project area lies within two school districts: Spokane School District No. 81 and Mead School District No. 354. Combined enrollment for both districts is over 38,000. Spokane Community College, located at Mission Avenue and Greene Street, is inside the study area.